

Members of Virginia's Congressional Delegation today sent a letter to U.S. Department of Labor Acting Secretary Seth D. Harris expressing unified support for a proposal to obtain a federal grant to support the *Hire Vets Virginia* initiative. All thirteen members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation signed the letter expressing interest in the proposal submitted for the National Emergency Grant on behalf of the Commonwealth.

The letter reads, in part:

"Virginians are proud that the Commonwealth serves as home to every service branch and that many of our nation's veterans choose to remain in Virginia following their active duty service. We have a responsibility to support our men and women in uniform and our nation's veterans deserve our unequivocal commitment when they return home...In this challenging economic time, it is more important than ever that we help connect well-qualified veterans not just with jobs, but with careers. Veterans possess leadership, problem solving, and teamwork experience that directly complements today's business environment. They deserve the opportunity to transition their skills, knowledge, and professionalism to a new career field...We believe that this proposal provides a great opportunity for our nation's veterans and their families."

Full text of the letter is below.

June 28, 2013

Acting Secretary Seth D. Harris
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Harris:

We are writing to express our interest in the Virginia Community College System's *Hire Vets Virginia* proposal submitted for the National Emergency Grant (NEG) on behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Virginians are proud that the Commonwealth serves as home to every service branch and that many of our nation's veterans choose to remain in Virginia following their active duty service. We have a responsibility to support our men and women in uniform and our nation's veterans *deserve our unequivocal commitment* when they return home.

We share the goals of making Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the nation and easing the transition for our military members as they enter the civilian workforce. In this challenging economic time, it is more important than ever that we help connect well-qualified veterans not just with jobs, but with careers. Veterans possess leadership, problem solving, and teamwork experience that directly complements today's business environment. They deserve the opportunity to transition their skills, knowledge, and professionalism to a new career field.

The *Hire Vets Virginia* initiative was developed through the collaboration of three Virginia Cabinet Secretaries, numerous state agencies, and partner organizations. This initiative works to address and fill in the gaps of federal transition services, provide individualized support for veterans seeking employment, and strengthen ties to the community and industry to provide additional employment opportunities. *Hire Vets Virginia* will strengthen and improve the services and benefits provided to veterans by the federal government and help up to 4,500 of our nation's veterans.

Virginia was chosen by the U.S. Department of Defense to pilot state transition policies for servicemembers in 2012. Lessons learned from this effort are being implemented in the *Hire Vets Virginia* program. Virginia's program will employ the use of public-private partnerships and provide specialized services and team support for veterans experiencing multiple barriers to employment, including those with disabilities, at risk of homelessness, and those with a criminal justice history. Other services for veterans include peer-to-peer mentoring, targeted training to fill identified job openings, credit for prior learning, specialized college orientation courses for veterans, and traditional supportive services for veterans for transportation, child care housing and needs-related payments.

We believe that this proposal provides a great opportunity for our nation's veterans and their families. We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Labor give this grant application full and fair consideration consistent with existing federal policies and laws. We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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